2:Richards E-5 (1930-1934)1939
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The produce of

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rivers, like that of the bush, is thought to be under the control of the spirits of the land. To secure their blessing the people depend ultimately on their territorial chief, but actually, in the case of any particular expedition, on the headmen of the villages near the streams, whether these latter have succeeded to their title or have been directly appointed by the chief. Fishing ceremonies vary between village and village. The complexity of the magico-religious rites, the position of leadership secured by their performance, and the degree of definition of fishing rights depend directly on the economic value of the supplies.

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Thus the headman of a village near a small stream offers prayers to the Land Spirits before an *ububa* expedition, as we have seen. But he is in no sense a leader in the enterprise, nor does his performance at the ceremony entitle him to special economic privileges.[1] Any stranger may join in a fishing party if he asks permission of the headman and gives him a fish or two from his catch. Each fish caught on such an expedition is the property of the man or woman who spears it, and, technically speaking, the headman or the owner of the *ububa* should get tribute from them. In the smaller rivers the supply of fish is so uncertain that most of these dues are not paid. *Mono* traps are set individually in the swamps without the accompaniment of any religious rite, apparently, and the setter of the trap may keep what he catches and put a conditional curse on the *mono*, if he knows one, to prevent fish being stolen. With net

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[1] The rites performed at an *ububa* expedition vary in different villages. Molema, headman of one of the specialist fishing villages on the Chambesi, told me that in the old days spirit huts (*nfuba*, sing. *ulufuba*) to the *imipashi* in charge of the waters were built by the river and that the headman opened the season by throwing *ububa* into the stream, calling, 'Let them die! Let the fish that have rotted be white on top of the water' (*Fyafwa! Fyabola fyabute pa mwishi tutu!*). This, he said, was to please the *imipashi* (*ukuzikusbya mipashi*). When the first fish were caught three were put in the *ulufuba* for the *imipashi*. 'Nowadays,' he added, 'we are Christians. We do not build *nfuba*. We tie knots in the grass instead to imitate (*kupashyana*) an *ulufuba*. That is our sacred place (*E pa mutumba!*) where we put the fish. A native of Shiwa Ndandu confirmed this form of the rite. He said it was good to joke with the *imipashi* as men do with members of the opposite clan (*Bamungwe*) and say to them after calling on them, 'You are the Mpende clan (*mpende* is a big fish that eats little ones, *mpepe*). You eat *mpepe! Muli bene mpende!*) *Mulya ne mpepe!* This is the way men of the Crocodile rag with the fish clan, pretending they are going to eat them, and it is good to joke (*ukucema*) with the *imipashi* in this way. Also it is lucky to get a man who is a notorious drinker to throw in some *ububa* to open the season. Then the fish get drunk as he does. The man shouts, '*Uleke ikulwe bwangu bwangu!*' (May they get drunk quickly, quickly!)

3: Richards E-5 (1930-1934)1956
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scenes of everyday life, extravagantly burlesqued and done with great character and abandon. Some of the dances belonged specifically to the chisungu ceremonies and were done to the chisungu rhythm, but others were dances that might be done at any beer drink of a rather formal character.

Most of the dances were comic. For instance, two or three women did dances imitating the hop of a frog to an accompanying song by the whole company. One gave a rendering of a woman gathering potatoes, and another of a woman grinding maize. Then a young man suddenly leaped into the centre with a light springing step from side to side. He snatched up a maize cob from the floor and tied it on his back to represent a baby, amid roars of laughter from the clapping crowd. A woman got up to join him and they threw the baby from one to the other in a way that was evidently considered comic in the extreme. The dance was described as 'just dancing', (*ukucindafye*). Then came a special chisungu dance. A young man who was not only the brother of the affianced bridegroom, but the son of a *nacimbusa*, sprang into the middle of the circle to do a typical dance of respect. He danced to each of the older women in order of seniority, calling them out to dance opposite him and singing one of the songs of respect that belong to such occasions. (No. 6.) He evidently knew the etiquette, and was determined to make the party go with a swing. He was described as 'a very respectful young man', (*wa mucinshi*).

Other dances of respect followed. Men of the girl's family did solo dances in honour of the women of the bridegroom's family. The younger women saluted the older *banacimbusa* in this way. One or two of the dances were modern, imitating the drill of the local Protestant Mission school.

THIRD DAY—SIXTH DAY

The making of the small pottery emblems

The third day opened with the carrying of a small pot of beer to Nangoshye and her helpers. It was presented by the mother of the bridegroom as part of her required payments.

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The Ceremony

At about twelve o'clock, ten to fifteen women went out into the bush round the village and started to make pottery emblems from clay which had been piled there by the younger helpers. It seemed to be a compulsory task as one of the women who was kept away sent a bracelet as a fine. Nangoshye gave instructions to each woman and allotted them their work, but it was clear that they were all experienced potters. She herself modelled the most important figures using pieces of bark as stands for her work. (She is seen modelling the crocodile p. 64.) The women gossiped but they worked quickly with marked concentration. The atmosphere was that of a sewing bee or Women's Institute meeting in this country, although the women occasionally broke out into rather racy jokes about the fertility emblems (see p. 211). There was no sacred tone about the occasion at all although Nangoshye was decidedly severe in manner, and once told the party they ought not to laugh while making the *mbusa*. A passing man was driven away with mock abuse.

At about two or three, the mother of one of the girls brought food. The women fell on it with their hands covered in clay. It was evidently a snack, a reward, and not a full meal. Later, a dish was sent by the mother of the second girl and was sent back with a peremptory demand for more. Such a small dish showed no respect to the ceremony, Nangoshye declared.

The fourth, fifth and sixth days passed quietly, with further work on the pottery emblems in the morning and more dancing in the hut in the evening. The *banacisungu* were remarkable for their absence. They once appeared with their cloths folded in the ordinary way, but were immediately shouted at. 'Pull down your cloths, you! Good heavens! Are you walking about just like us people of quality? Are you trying to hide your breasts as we do?'[1]

Nangoshye complained constantly that she did not get enough food. It was her pride that was hurt. It was true that people called her to eat with them, she admitted, but they called her from pity only. There was no formal presentation of food, no 'respect'.

[1] Women wear their cloths round their waists when working but above their breasts when at leisure. Princesses always wear them in the latter way.

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The Ceremony

SEVENTH DAY

The first woodland ceremony

X 881 *Taking them out to the bush* (*ukufumisha banacisungu mumpanga*). On the seventh day we were all summoned to the hut at about nine in the morning. The *banacisungu* were bundled in under rugs as before. Each was then hobbled by having one foot strapped with bark rope to her thigh, so she could only hop on the remaining leg, and had to be supported by an older woman.[1] Both girls looked embarrassed, and hid their faces as they came out to the public gaze.

● [522] ('We are doing that just to tease the girls. That is what they did to us when we were initiated.' With evident relish, another added, 'We always do that to tease the girls.')

Outside the village, the girls' legs were untied but they still had to walk naked except for a cloth around the waist. They strode in front with heads hanging in acute shame. Behind them came a swarm of gesticulating women, running, shouting and scrambling. Two or three ran off into the bush to look for some of the emblems that would be needed for the rest of the ceremony—a special creeper used to tie up other emblems, and supple branches to be used to make mock bows. The young girls of the village followed behind carrying drums on their heads.

The gardening mimes

We stopped at a large *musuku* tree,[2] about an hour's walk away from the village. The base of the tree was quickly cleared of undergrowth with a hoe, and Nangoshye and her younger helpers began hopping round the trunk of the tree like frogs followed by the *banacisungu*. They sang 'O, you wild pig, come and hoe up the rough grass.' (Song No. 7.)

'Because the pigs root up the ground.' 'It is to train the girl to hoe.' 'It is to teach her to work hard now she is married.'[3]

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[1] Van Warmelo reports a similar 'hobbling' of girls in the *domba* ceremony of the Venda.

[2] The tree of fertility, as is the *mukolobondo* tree.

[3] *Subsequent interpretation* (P.B.M.). The women imitate the wild pig because the pig digs up food in difficult places. So the young wife must break up the ground to get food out of it.

N.G. It is to teach the girl to get up early to help her husband, as the pigs are out in the bush before it is light.

A.C. 'You have to look for food to feed those about you and bring children up in the way we have brought you up.'

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brother is looking after her.' 'There is the brother. He says, "Hush! don't cry! Follow me. I am going to look after you now." ' 'Yes, she must honour her brother now because her father is dead.' Over and over again details of the figures were criticized and admired. Most Bemba delight in describing the brother-sister relationship which is such a pivot of the matrilineal system. They refer to it in proverb and folk-tale, and adopt a specially sentimental tone in speaking of it in daily life. Most of the chisungu ritual stresses the husband's duty to feed and clothe his wife, but here the women seem to emphasize the brother's perpetual obligation to look after his sister before, during and after her marriage. Some obscene jokes made about the navel of the woman's figure made me wonder whether there was also some representation of brother-sister incest, but the navel itself is considered an amusing and obscene part of the body by the Bemba, so that I do not know if I am right.

The bed

A third model standing against the wall consisted of three hollow squares of clay. It was known as the bed or the 'blankets'. This model did not seem to attract much attention, although women began to sing a song about a great *nacimbusa* wearing a plumed head-dress. (No. 23)

(One woman said the model represented the girl's bed. Another that it was to teach the girl that even if her husband gave her no blankets or clothing yet she was to stay with him. Whatever he did she was just to look on (*ukutamba*) and not to speak of it to her friends. In the old days, she added, a girl could not get a divorce from a man who did not provide for her. If she went to complain, her grandmother would merely say, 'Well, you must sit naked, then. Stay with the fool you are with'. (*cipuba cobe.*))

Magic of attraction

After this hard day's work, I was surprised to find that the whole design was suddenly pulled to pieces two hours after it was finished and when it had only just been shown to the *banacisungu*. Every marrow seed was taken out carefully and whitened in sorghum flour for use the following day. The clay was stacked up outside the hut. Nangoshye remained behind to stick some magic leaves in the roof of the hut. 'It is magic (*bwanga*). We put it there

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The Ceremony

The fool

881 532 523 Near the door of the hut two of the younger helpers modelled another human figure. It was a squat, round female form, highly stylized. It was at once recognized by visitors with shrieks of laughter as the fool (*cipuba*). This is a word that is difficult to translate. It means a person who is either naturally stupid, or else just obtuse, unconscious of the niceties of civilized life, and either unaware of her social obligations or just too lazy to bother to carry them out. In this context, I was told 'The *cipuba*? She is a woman who just sits about.' The speaker imitated someone sitting limp and collapsed on the floor. 'She just refuses to do what is asked of her—all kinds of work. She just says "No" to her husband. She refuses food to visitors. She doesn't fetch water or keep the house nice! This is what she looks like.' There followed another imitation of a woman sitting huddled up with rounded shoulders and head bent down. All this information was volunteered eagerly amid much amused comment on the figure itself. One of the *banacimbusa* said to me in an undertone, 'Besides it is a woman who doesn't understand how to do things. She hasn't been taught. She would let a man see the menstrual blood.' Her voice changed to one of real horror and disgust. 'She just doesn't bother about anything.' The figure represented both the uninitiated woman who has not been taught the patterns of female conduct, and the lazy wife who has forgotten the lessons she has learnt.

881 At about seven o'clock, the models were again completely destroyed and the clay put back outside the hut for further use next day.

FOURTEENTH DAY

The whitening magic (ukuya ku mpemba)

When the mid-day meal was over the drums began to beat and the village women gathered outside the chisungu hut. We went in straggling procession down to the river and stood by the soft black mud that lined the banks. Nangoshye took a mouthful of the dirty water and sprayed it in the air. Everyone clapped and ululated.

(The rite seemed significant in the sense that the performers

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The Ceremony

X881 female tree representing fertility, was honoured in the same way
524 during the first bush ceremony (p. 70). The *mwenge* is another female tree, representing apparently the pliancy of the woman, just as the *mulombwa*, the hard-wood tree which exudes a red juice, represents the male, the lion, and in some cases the chief.

X881 The act of picking up objects with the mouth was described as a method of honouring the *mbusa* or the *mwenge* tree, with the complementary remark that things were picked up in the mouth because it was unusual. The girls must learn to do unusual things, said one woman.)

The drinking of the beer

Nangoshye then dug a small hole in the ground under the *mwenge* tree and poured the small gourd of beer into it. The earth seemed to hold the thick sludge of the beer and its foam frothed level with the surface of the ground. Nangoshye scattered red dye powder, small rings of white beads and lumps of white clay on top. She was still exasperated and paused to scold the helpers: 'Who has drunk some of the beer on the way down?' she asked. This was a serious matter and not just a time when you could snatch beer without ceremony just as you pleased. However, she addressed herself to the rite in hand without waiting to clear the matter up. She lay on her back beside the hole and supporting herself on her two elbows bobbed up and down to the drum beats until she got herself into position. Then she lowered her head on to the ground near the hole and lapped some of the beer with her tongue, first on the right side and then on the left. She was followed by the senior *banacimbusa* and finally by all the helpers in turn. Each had to make a formal obeisance to Nangoshye and to me. It was quite a difficult operation to carry out and each woman who managed to suck up a lot of beer was greeted with shouts of applause and song:

> '*I shall not answer you*
> *I shall not answer you, useless creature.*'[1]

X881 The two girls themselves then had to drink from the hole with
●522 much advice and shouting. The company was by now very much

[1] *Subsequent Bemba interpretation* (A.C.): 'Do not talk when under the influence of drink.'

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amused and interested, and the rings of beer foam round everyone's mouth were thought excruciatingly funny.

Finally, there was another rite of 'honouring the *mbusa*'. Nangoshye picked up the pottery emblems and hung beads on them. She offered them ceremonially to the elders in order, singing as a solo this time the precedence song, 'The arm-pit is not higher than the shoulder.'

The women shouted in congratulation to her. They used one of the old praise songs of the chief:

Mpuba mumumba!
Kwewa! Kwewa!

and greeted her with the nick-name that had been given her during the chisungu, '*Washishye*' 'You have been refused food'—a reference to the stinginess of the girls' mothers during the ceremony.

The symbolism of this rite is still obscure to me. The making and distribution of beer is one of the married women's most important duties and it is natural that this aspect of the girls' future work should be mimed in the ceremony. Women told me that the rite was to teach the bride to hide a gourd of beer in her hut and to produce it for her husband when the guest had gone. Another added that it was to teach the girls to submit themselves to their husbands (*ukunakila*), the latter perhaps in conjunction with the honouring of the pliant *mwenge* tree. The association of beer-making with gardens is obvious in the day-to-day speech of the Bemba and the offering of the pottery emblems known as the 'garden mound' could be interpreted as making the bride free to cultivate her own garden and hence to brew the resultant beer. The garden-mound also symbolizes the woman owned and 'cultivated' by her husband (No. 44).

The preparation of the jumping hoop (mupeto)

The two girls were then sent off with some of the younger helpers to fetch a piece of the *mulombwa*, or male tree. They came back carrying a branch on their shoulders and they were left to kneel with it thus with down-cast eyes in the humble attitude (see frontispiece) whilst the older women offered the different *mbusa* to it ritually.

614 has finally been settled the *banungwe* are again
616 essential. They have also to brew the beer for
764 the feast held for the kinsmen on such occasions. Besides these necessary ritual functions which people perform for their *banungwe*, they also taunt them at the funeral, irritate them and make jokes. Some of the opposite clan members must follow the burial party to the grave. The moment the body has been buried and earth piled over it in a mound, one of the *banungwe* breaks the silence with a sudden shout. He rails at the mourning family, mocks at them, and accuses them of having buried a live man. He calls out, 'You, there! Why do you bury a man 'who is alive? Listen to him knocking down 'there! Can't you hear him? He is asking 'for some snuff. You enemies, you! (the usual 'term applied by *banungwe* to each other). See 'what things you do! You go and bury live 'men!' The taunts are, of course, expected, but were received, at each funeral I attended, with a kind of horrified silence, till suddenly the tension broke, and the mourners who had been wailing for some six hours without break, began sheepishly to laugh, and broke into an uncere-
monious run back to the village, still pursued by shouts from the irrepressible *banungwe*, 'Look 'out you now! He has risen (*Kubuka*) from 'the grave, that man you buried. He is coming 'after you asking for porridge.'[1] Older natives say that the mourners were beaten by their
[428] *banungwe* in the old days and add that the latter were also responsible for handing over to the heirs the insignia of inheritance—the bow of the dead man, or the belt of the woman—but I never saw either of these customs practised myself.

614 As ritually expressed the traditional attitude
616 between *banungwe* is therefore one of hostility,
● 522 and yet, as the complementary nature of the clan names imply, one of reciprocal service. *Banungwe* regularly address each other as 'You, 'my enemy!' (*Mwe mulwani mwe!*) and delight in laughter at the habits of the objects, whether animal or plant, of the opposite clan. A member of the crocodile clan will scoff at one of the fish people and deride him as, 'You! You are just 'my food ration!' (*poso*, the word used for a government ration given to employees). 'Come 'over here! I want to give you to my wife to 'cook.' The *banungwe* of the fish clan retaliates

[775]

[1] The word *kubuka* is that used for a dead man's spirit which returns to haunt the living (a *cira*).

[p. 190(B)]

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614 616 322 [793]

with a derisive imitation of the slow ungainly walk of the crocodile and compares its gait with the speed of the fish. At the court of the Paramount Chief this type of joking relationship has been formalized, and the head of the fish clan, a makishi, or hereditary priest of the tribal ancestral spirits, must dramatize the joking antagonism between the two clans by appearing in special regalia each time he visits the chief, and threatening him with a broad-bladed fishing spear. On such occasions the Paramount is protected by the head of the dog clan, who has to dance in front of him, pretending to bark in defence of his master. The surrounding courtiers shout the praise names of the fish clan, and encourage the actors. Such a ceremony may be enacted some four or five times during one week during a session of the tribal council. It is never omitted, although performed with diminishing gusto as the week proceeds, and sometimes under modern conditions as a preface to some matter-of-fact discussion of tribal business under the Native Courts Ordinance.

FIG. 1. THE FISH CLAN MEMBER IN REGALIA THREATENING TO SPEAR THE CHIEF, WHO IS SEATED AT THE TOP OF THE MOUND PROTECTED BY THE DOG CLAN MEMBER (STANDING).

614 616 [683]

In spite of the joking hostility, *bawupwe* behave to each other with special ease and freedom.[1] They can demand privileges of each other and take each other's possessions. They can swear at each other obscenely (*kutuka nasi*), a form of injury for which the sufferer can claim legal redress as an ordinary rule. It is said that even a commoner may swear at his chief in this

[1] My native clerk, asked to type out some notes on *bawupwe*, translated the term as 'bottom friends.'

[p. 191(A)]